

Message Text

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UNCLAS MOSCOW 14715

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TAGS: PNT, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET LECTURER'S FRANK ASSESSMENT OF ITALIAN SCENE

SUMMARY: AT A RECENT PUBLIC LECTURE A NOVOSTI OFFICIAL
EXPOUNDED ON THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SCENE. HE
ASSESSED THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES, COMMENTED FRANKLY ON
PCI-MOSCOW RELATIONS AND FORECAST A PREDICTABLY GLOOMY ITALIAN
ECONOMIC PICTURE. REMARKS ON PSI, PCI AND LATTER'S RELATIONS WITH
CPSU WERE MORE FORTHRIGHT (AND LESS UPBEAT ON PROSPECTS) THAN
SOVIET MEDIA APPROACH. END SUMMARY.

1. AT A SEPTEMBER 15 PUBLIC LECTURE SPONSORED BY THE ZNANIYE
SOCIETY IN MOSCOW, NOVOSTI OFFICIAL GAMER BAUTDINOV (PHONETIC)
ADDRESSED THE CURRENT ITALIAN SCENE. HE OFFERED THE FOLLOWING
COMMENTS ON THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES:

-- CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. STILL THE STRONGEST PARTY, THOUGH GROWING
RELATIVELY WEAKER DURING A PERIOD OF RECENT STEADY DECLINE.
BAUTDINOV REMARKED THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS STILL TAP THE
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LATENT STRENGTH OF ITALIAN ANTI-COMMUNISM, WHILE DOING THEIR

BEST TO FOSTER IT.

-- SOCIALISTS. UNDER NENNI, THE SOCIALISTS HAD THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE ITALIAN PEOPLE AT HEART. NOW, HOWEVER, THEY WERE BADLY LED AND THEIR OLD ORIENTATION AND POLICIES ARE DISCREDITED. MORE THAN ANY OTHER PARTY, THE SOCIALISTS WERE TO BLAME FOR THE RECENT ITALIAN POLITICAL CRISIS AND WERE THEMSELVES IN SAD SHAPE.

-- PCI. CLEARLY THE STRONGEST PARTY ON THE LEFT FLANK. BUT BAUTDINOV ATTRIBUTED THEIR STRENGTH TO THE EFFORTS OF TOGLIATTI, "A GREAT FRIEND OF THE USSR." BERLINGUER WAS MENTIONED, BUT NOT PROMINENTLY OR PARTICULARLY FAVORABLY. THE IDEA THAT THE PCI WAS NOW CLOSELY LINKED TO MOSCOW WAS DISMISSED AS "OBVIOUSLY NAIVE". PCI-MOSCOW RELATIONS WERE DESCRIBED AS "COMPLICATED." A MAJOR CONTINUING DISPUTE WITH MOSCOW CENTERED ON THE 1968 INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. BUT THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THE IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THE DAY.

2. BAUTDINOV ALSO REMARKED THAT WHILE U.S. INTERFERENCE WAS THE MAJOR REASON THE PCI HAD BEEN DENIED A PLACE IN THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT, THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY WAS NOT AS STRONG AS THE JUNE ELECTION RESULTS AND THEIR CONTROL OF MAJOR CITIES WOULD INDICATE. HE COMMENTED THAT IN THE SOVIET VIEW, MANY WHOCAST PCI VOTES WERE SUPPORTERS OF PCI STANDS ON CERTAIN ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE "INTELLIGENTSIA" BUT NOT ACTIVE PARTY SUPPORTERS.

3. THE NOVOSTI REP'S POLITICAL ASSESSMENT HAD BEEN PREFACED BY A PREDICTABLY GLOOMY VIEW OF ITALY'S ECONOMIC PROSPECTS. HARD-HIT BY THE "DEVELOPING CRISIS OF CAPITALISM," THE ITALIANS WERE BESET WITH STRIKES AND BALANCE OF TRADE DIFFICULTIES. ALL OF WHICH WAS ADDITIONALLY COMPOUNDED BY A BASIC LACK OF ESSENTIAL NATURAL RESOURCES SUCH AS OIL.

4. COMMENT. WHILE MOST OF WHAT BAUTDINOV SAID IS OF COURSE CONSISTENT WITH SOVIET MEDIA LINE ON ITALIAN AFFAIRS, IT IS FRANKER ON PSI SINS, PCI WEAKNESSES AND ESPECIALLY ON PCI-CPSU RELATIONS. IMPRESSION THAT SOVIETS WILL BE CONTENT WITH POLITICAL STATUS QUO IN ITALY THEREFORE ARISES MORE STRONGLY HERE THAN FROM READING AND LISTENING TO MEDIA.

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